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HOOSIER HEALTHWISE PROGRAM CAN HELP UNINSURED CHILDREN

INDIANAPOLIS—State Rep. Linda Lawson (D-Hammond) urged uninsured, low-income families to find out if the Hoosier Healthwise program could help them with low-cost or even free health care coverage for their children.

Families of four earning an annual income of \$38,700 or less may qualify for assistance through the Hoosier Healthwise program.

"A recent federally-funded study indicates that more than 93,000 children are uninsured in our state," said Lawson. "Uninsured children are seven times more likely to go without needed medical attention than children from families with health insurance. When an illness goes untreated, it gets worse and oftentimes leads to hospital visits or even serious illness that could have been prevented. I urge families with no health insurance to take the time to call to find out if their children would be eligible."

The toll-free number for Hoosier Healthwise is 1-800-889-9949. One also can visit the website www.ckfindiana.org to learn more about the *Covering Kids & Families* program in Indiana.

Covering Kids & Families is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, a national organization that works with health care facilities, community-based organizations, state agencies, and businesses in every state in order to help low-income families identify affordable health care coverage.

Currently, the Indiana State Department of Health and the Indiana Department of Education are participating in the Back-to-School Campaign, which is part of the *Covering Kids & Families* initiative. Numerous events will take place throughout the state to promote an awareness of the Hoosier Healthwise program.

One of those events will be a Back-to-School Health & Fun Fair on Saturday, Aug. 13 from 10 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Ophelia Steen Center, 5927 Columbia Ave. in Hammond. This will be the first time a *Covering Kids & Families* event has been held in Hammond. Dental, health and vision screenings in addition to immunizations and on-site Hoosier Healthwise enrollment will be available.

Most children currently eligible for the free and reduced lunch program also will be eligible for Hoosier Healthwise.

"Approximately 785,000 Hoosiers will be uninsured for this year of 2005, according to recent studies," explained Lawson. "Much more needs to be done to help families cope with the high cost of health care and prescription drugs. At least, this program will help our state's children get the medical attention they need. It is a start, but only a start."

